

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, TU
SUBJ: POLITICAL VIEWS OF PRIVATE SECTOR

1. IN RECENT WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL GENERAL, NEJAT ECZACIBASI, PROMINENT MEMBER OF POWERFUL ISTANBUL GROUP OF INDUSTRIALISTS, PROVIDED INSIGHTS INTO POLITICAL VIEWS OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN TURKEY. OTHER MEMBERS OF THIS GROUP HAVE EXPRESSED MANY OF SAME OPINIONS.

2. DESPITE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, ECZACIBASI WAS ENCOURAGED SO FAR BY THE PERFORMANCE OF PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT CONSIDER HIM A STATESMAN YET, HE THOUGHT THE POTENTIAL WAS THERE. THE PRIME MINISTER, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS A SINCERE SOCIAL DEMOCRAT, HAD SHOWN SKILL, ENERGY, IMAGINATION AND DEDICATION IN ATTACKING TURKEY'S PROBLEMS. ECEVIT WAS TURKEY'S ONLY ALTERNATIVE AS A LEADER AND MUST BE SUPPORTED. HE WAS MUCH LESS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE CALIBRE OF THE CABINET. WHILE CONTENDING THAT BUSINESS LEADERS ENJOYED ACCESS TO POLICY-MAKERS (HE HIMSELF HAD SCHEDULED A TRIP A FEW DAYS LATER TO TALK WITH OFFICIALS IN ANKARA), HE REGRETTED
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THAT THEIR INFLUENCE WAS NOT GREATER. EXCAZIBASI PRAISED, INTER ALIA, ECEVIT'S COURAGE SHOWN BY HIS ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL WAGE INCREASES, BUT WORRIED ABOUT IMPLICATIONS OF GOT'S PROPOSED TAX REVISION WHICH HE SAID WOULD FURTHER BURDEN THOSE ALREADY BEARING THE BRUNT OF TAXATION.

3. ON THE QUESTION OF LIFTING THE U.S. EMBARGO IF MILITARY

ASSISTANCE TO TURKEY, EXZACIBASI PERCEIVED THE ISSUE AS A POSSIBLE TURNING POINT FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN TURKEY. IF EMBARGO CONTINUES, HE FEARS FURTHER STRENGTHENING OF FORCES, EXPECIALLY WITHIN RULING REPUBLIC PEOPLES PARTY (RPP), WHO OPPOSE FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM. SYSTEM WAS ASSOCIATED WITH ITS LEADING EXPONENT, THE UNITED STATES, AND EXZACIBASI ANTICIPATED IF EMBARGO CONTINUED THERE WOULD BE GRADUAL CHANGE IN TURKEY'S PRESENT ECONOMIC SYSTEM TO ACCOMPANY DECLINE IN BILATERAL U.S.-TURKISH RELATIONS.

4. COMMENT: FORCED FOR LACK OF A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO SUPPORT PRESENT GOVERNMENT, EXZACIBASI REFLECTS GENERAL OPINION OF ISTANBUL BUSINESS LEADERS WHO OBJECT TO SOCIALIST DIRECTION OF MUCH OF PRIME MINISTER ECEVIT'S PROGRAM AND THE ANTI-PRIVATE SECTOR ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS OF SOME OF HIS MINISTERS BUT WHO SUPPORT HIS GOVERNMENT AS TURKEY'S ONLY HOPE. WESTERN-ORIENTED LEADERS OF ISTANBUL'S PRIVATE SECTOR WERE FED UP WITH THE LACK OF DIRECTION IN THE PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT, ITS LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS TO TURKEY'S SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND THE REACTIONARY TENDENCIES OF DEMIREL'S COALITION PARTNERS, PARTICULARLY ERBAKAN. THEY ARE FOR PRESENT WILLING TO ACCTPT ECEVIT WHO OFFERS DECISIVE ACTION ON ECONOMIC FRONT, ALBEIT NOT ALWAYS IN THEIR INTERESTS, AND WHOSE PERFORMANCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS THEY BY AND LARGE APPLAUD.

5. IT IS, HOWEVER, AN UNEASY ALLIANCE. INDUSTRIAL LEADERS
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SUCH AS ECZACIBASI DEPLORE THE ABSENCE OF A "RESPONSIBLE" OPPOSITION WHICH COULD PROVIDE A CHECK ON SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S SOCIALIST LEANINGS AND STRENGTHEN THE GOVERNMENT IN ITS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE, INTER ALIA, PROBLEMS OF SECURITY AND THE ECONOMY WHICH ARE OF CONCERN TO ALL. THEY HAVE, HOWEVER, DESPAIRED OF SULEYMAN DEMIREL PLAYING SUCH A ROLE AND MAY WELL BE WORKING BEHIND THE SCENES IN EFFORTS WITHIN THE JUSTICE PARTY TO REPLACE HIM AS PARTY LEADER. SHOULD THE JP, WHICH IS GENERALLY VIEWED AS THE PRIVATE SECTOR'S NATURAL HOME, COME UP WITH REVITALIZED LEADERSHIP, MUCH OF THE RPP'S SUPPORT FROM THIS GROUP COULD EVAPORATE.
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